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CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1.   A method in a data processing system for modifying
rules to process electronic messages:

    detecting user input moving an electronic message
into a folder, wherein a rule is associated with the
folder;

    determining whether the electronic message matches
the rule;

    identifying characteristics of the electronic
message if a match between the rule and the electronic
message is absent; and

    modifying the rule using the characteristics to form
a modified rule.

2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:

    processing received messages using the modified
rule.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein the processing step is
initiated in response to another user input approving use
of the modified rule.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein the criteria includes
priority-based common fields and common content.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the folder is a trash
folder.

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1   6.   The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics

2   includes at least one of a sender address, a selected

3   word in a subject line body of the electronic message, a

4   select word in a body of the electronic message, and an

5   attribute of the time/date field of the electronic

6   message.

1   7.   The method of claim 1, wherein the identifying step

2   includes:

3   identifying the characteristics of the electronic

4   message absent from the rule.

1   8.   A method in a data processing system for modifying

2   rules for processing messages, the method comprising the

3   data processing system implemented steps of:

4   detecting a manipulation of an electronic message,

5   wherein a rule is associated with the manipulation;

6   determining whether the electronic message matches

7   the rule;

8   identifying characteristics of the electronic

9   message if a match between the rule and the electronic

10   message is absent; and

11   modifying the rule using the characteristics.

1   9.   The method of claim 8, wherein the manipulation is a

2   deletion of the message.

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1   10.   The method of claim 8, wherein the manipulation is a
2   movement of the electronic message from a first folder to
3   a second folder.

1   11.   A data processing system comprising:
2   a bus system;
3   a communications unit connected to the bus system;
4   a memory connected to the bus system, wherein the
5   memory includes as set of instructions; and
6   a processing unit connected to the bus system,
7   wherein the processing unit executes the set of
8   instructions to detect a manipulation of an electronic
9   message in which a rule is associated with the
10 manipulation, determine whether the electronic message
11 matches the rule, identify characteristics of the
12 electronic message if a match between the rule and the
13 electronic message is absent, and modify the rule using
14 the characteristics.

1   12.   The data processing system of claim 11, wherein the
2   bus system is a single bus.

1   12.   The data processing system of claim 11, wherein the
2   bus system includes a primary bus and a secondary bus.

1   14.   The data processing system of claim 11, wherein the
2   processing unit includes a plurality of processors.

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1   15. The data processing system of claim 11, wherein the

2   communications unit is one of a modem and Ethernet

3   adapter.

1   16.   A data processing system for modifying rules to

2   process electronic messages, the data processing system

3   comprising:

4   detecting means for detecting user input moving an

5   electronic message into a folder, wherein a rule is

6   associated with the folder;

7   determining means for determining whether the

8   electronic message matches the rule;

9   identifying means for identifying characteristics of

10   the electronic message if a match between the rule and

11   the electronic message is absent; and

12   modifying means for modifying the rule using the

13   characteristics to form a modified rule.

1   17.   The data processing system of claim 16 further

2   comprising:

3   processing means for processing received messages

4   using the modified rule.

1   18.   The data processing system of claim 17, wherein the

2   processing means is initiated in response to another user

3   input approving use of the modified rule.

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1 19. The data processing system of claim 16, wherein the
2 criteria includes priority-based common fields and common
3 content.

1 20. The data processing system of claim 16, wherein the
2 folder is a trash folder.

1 21. The data processing system of claim 16, wherein the
2 characteristics includes at least one of a sender
3 address, a selected word in a subject line body of the
4 electronic message, a select word in a body of the
5 electronic message, and an attribute of the time/date
6 field of the electronic message.

1 22. The data processing system of claim 16, wherein the
2 identifying means includes:
3   identifying means for identifying the
4 characteristics of the electronic message absent from the
5 rule.

1 23. A data processing system for modifying rules for
2 processing messages, the data processing system
3 comprising:
4   detecting means for detecting a manipulation of an
5 electronic message, wherein a rule is associated with the
6 manipulation;
7   determining means for determining whether the
8 electronic message matches the rule;

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9   identifying means for identifying characteristics of

10   the electronic message if a match between the rule and

11   the electronic message is absent; and

12   modifying means for modifying the rule using the

13   characteristics.

1   24. The data processing system of claim 23, wherein the

2   manipulation is a deletion of the message.

1   25. The data processing system of claim 23, wherein the

2   manipulation is a movement of the electronic message from

3   a first folder to a second folder.

1   26. A computer program product in a computer readable

2   medium for use in a data processing system for modifying

3   rules to process electronic messages:

4   first instructions for detecting user input moving

5   an electronic message into a folder, wherein a rule is

6   associated with the folder;

7   second instructions for determining whether the

8   electronic message matches the rule;

9   third instructions for identifying characteristics

10   of the electronic message if a match between the rule and

11   the electronic message is absent; and

12   fourth instructions for modifying the rule using the

13   characteristics to form a modified rule.

1   27. A computer program product in a computer readable

2   medium for use in a data processing system for modifying

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3   rules for processing messages, the computer program

4   product comprising:

5   first instructions for detecting a manipulation of

6   an electronic message, wherein a rule is associated with

7   the manipulation;

8   second instructions for determining whether the

9   electronic message matches the rule;

10   third instructions for identifying characteristics

11   of the electronic message if a match between the rule and

12   the electronic message is absent; and

13   fourth instructions for modifying the rule using the

14   characteristics.